

Maryland Commission on Disabilities

Minutes for meeting held on April 14, 2005

Present

Basehart, Sarah; Brathwaite, Janice; Britt, Gwendolyn; Bynum, Edward J.; Capone, Kenneth S.; George, Jamie; Holland, Susan W.; Krout, Robin A; Mitchell, Van; Nicole, Marc; Rock, Alisa; Sweeny, Bob; Ward, C. David; Weglein, Elizabeth.

Not attending

Benson, Joanne; Otto, Dale; Riccobono, Melissa; Rizzo, Juliette; Schulz, Mark; Wireman, Kenneth.

- I. Welcoming remarks by Craig Williams and Dave Ward
- II. Self Introductions by attending Commission members.
- III. Call for Agenda review and additions, call for time allotment for public comment

Additional topics for agenda discussion

Consumer group discussion

Commissioners suggested the creation of a consumer group in response to Maryland's recent CMS grant submission. Sarah Brathwaite and Kenny Capone were asked to organize a consumer group for future use in grant proposals. Commissioners agreed that putting together a consumer group would be a proactive approach.

Commission notification

Commission members expressed concern over notification of activities and requested better dissemination of information. Members of the commission were not aware of what was being done with sub-committees and work groups.

The Agenda was approved as amended and the Minutes were approved.

IV. Monthly Commission Update Overview

The Monthly Commission Update will serve as an overview of Commission activities, it will include upcoming meetings and activities and it will address anything related to the Commission. This should keep the commission informed and up to date.

V. Legislative Overview

Successes

Health Care Workers

Workers had not received a pay increase in ten years. Support legislation was developed for health care workers; they received a 10% raise. MDOD is going to have an advisory committee for home health care workers; the advisory committee will be directed by Rhonda Workman and it will be formed in July.

Mental Health Community

Legislation passed that would allow a person who acquires a disability that prevents them from accessing their home to legally get out of a lease if the landlord cannot provide the physical accommodation.

Lead Poisoning

The lead poisoning initiative passed.

Failures

OCYF/Children's Cabinet

The Governor's Office of Children Youth and Families will be dissolved July 1st. A very high percentage of children served by this office are children with disabilities. MDOD has expressed concern to the Governor's office regarding disruption of services to children with disabilities due to these changes.

Highlights

Autism Waiver

There are 900 individuals being served with 1000 people on a waiting list, the average cost is \$40,000 per child.

Budget Cuts

MDOD's budget is 7.7 million dollars for FY 2006; the legislation cut 1 million dollars that we had put in as a deficiency appropriation.

Deficiency Appropriation

Deficiency appropriations request additional funding for a current year. A deficiency appropriation is requested when an agency reviews the current year's funding and they realize they don't have enough money to pay for the services until the end of the year. .

Average Costs

Discussion started in response to model waivers regarding the difficulty determining the average cost of persons served by the dollar waiver programs. The longer waiver

programs are run the better the understanding there is of the costs involved. For example, when an individual first participates in a program, they may not be aware of what they are allowed to access, and then as their awareness rises, they begin to understand what services they can receive. Availability of service is often an issue as well. In the past anticipated costs were estimated by measuring how much individual costs in institutions went over a set cap, from that number an aggregate average was taken. The proposed 1115 waiver does not measure anticipated costs in this manner and its budget is different altogether.

The budget priorities handed out at the last meeting were well supported. Overall, the spending that the Governor's budget included was supported by the General Assembly. There was a modest reduction for the mental health community. The budget also included language that redirected money to fund the REM program after much discussion with different advocates and providers.

VI Updates

State Disabilities Plan

The State Plan was submitted to the Governor by MDOD for approval after reviewing and incorporating comments from the Commission.

State Planning Meeting

The first state planning meeting was held in February and had about 50 people representing different units of government in attendance, including Dave Ward.

State Disabilities Plan Availability

The Commission agreed that the State Disabilities Plan is not public enough. Many consumers groups have not heard about it. The public version of the State Disabilities Plan contains only the outcomes and strategies; this is not the first version that was shared with the Commission. MDOD will send an electronic copy of the public version to the commissioners for clarity.

State Plan Circulation and Distribution

The State Disabilities Plan was sent out during the Legislative Session to the General Assembly and select individuals for review. The State Plan is now public. MDOD is hiring a webmaster so the State Plan will soon be up on the Internet.

Unit Plans

MDOD finalized action steps from the State Plan and then sent them to different units of state government. Each unit of state government is responsible for its action steps. We had almost every unit of state government respond with a unit plan, and they had to outline their plan and whether or not they will achieve it. There were 80 action steps and we had almost all of the units respond with a quick turnaround time.

Reporting Process

All units of government are required to report to MDOD by July 1st, MDOD plans to

make the reports accessible to the public, including MDOD's role, MDOD wants to be accountable as a unit of government. In July, once MDOD gets the report back, it will use them for direction for the next State Disabilities Plan. In July, MDOD will begin the first unit plan evaluations. The goal is not to overburden people with piles of paper work; MDOD wants to achieve tangible and attainable outcomes.

VII Commission activities

Commission Activities and Outreach

MDOD and the Commission need more outreach to the community. Through outreach both entities will be able to have increased contact with consumers across the state with disabilities. An organized and concerted effort needs to be developed; Commissioners should identify opportunities for the Commission to be represented.

Individuals

Discussion was held regarding MCOD's role regarding specific issues of individuals and the needs of consumers. MDOD has a constituent services program that keeps track of all individual constituent complaints; they receive, on average, 34 calls a week from across the state. The Commission's primary role is policy and the Commission cannot get involved in every constituent case. The Commission can rely on MDOD to report overarching issues and trends. The Commission can also advise MDOD on larger constituent issues and how to respond.

Discussion on commission meetings frequency and arrangements

It was requested for more frequent meetings and for the meetings to be more widely publicized.

Budget

The Commission does not have a budget for community outreach activities, if there is a need for funding for community outreach MDOD would be willing to consider.

Alliance Meetings

It was suggested that MCOD get on the agenda at every Alliance meeting. Susan Holland commented that she attends the Alliance meetings and reports on the Commission.

Transportation

One of the problems is that the commission's meetings are not always accessible for public transportation.

World of Possibilities Expo in May at the Timonium Fairgrounds

MDOD will be exhibiting at the world of possibilities expo. This is an excellent outreach opportunity; MDOD is requesting help from the commission. MDOD will have a booth and would like commissioners to volunteer to take shifts.

Specific Events

Deidre McCabe is the director of communications she will be working within the department and the commission to determine specific outreach events to promote both entities in the community. If you have ideas let her know at 410 767 3654 or dmccabe@mdod.state.md.us

VIII Work Groups

Service integration initiative

Rational

Secretary Kris Cox explained the service integration initiative. The State of Maryland currently spends about 3.6 billion dollars on disabilities programs and services. That money is spread out among 98 service groups that provide services to people with disabilities. A total of 89 application processes exist for services to people with disabilities. Maryland has over 28 coordinating entities at the local level. With the large number of service groups and application processes it is the goal of the Department of Disabilities to streamline this process.

Process

Development of the State Disabilities Plan has started MDOD is looking at the focus areas. The Plan touches upon these areas, and the service integration was too complicated to get done in three months. This is going to take years, but what MDOD would like to do is meet with consumers, people, stakeholders, and identify the needs of people. MDOD is not going to change the system overnight. Once MDOD has a set of priorities, it will rely on the Commission for further review and refining. MDOD will include more on service integration in the next State Plan.

Olmstead

Research group

A research group was formed involving a number of commission members, individuals from the community and members of the MDOD staff. The research group produced their findings regarding Olmstead to MDOD. The research group reviewed all the reports produced regarding Olmstead over the past 12 years.

Next Steps

The work group will review work completed and select priorities for the next few years. Once the work group picks out the priorities they will be presented to the General Assembly. This will meeting will be open to the public.

Facility Review

One of the next steps is a top down review of Maryland's facilities, MDOD needs to come up with a biographical sketch on each institution, acreage, how it got there and environmental issues. MDOD needs to adopt a 10-20 year plan as to how to handle assets (buildings), what to turn them into, partnerships, other counties, etc...

Capital Programs

The Department wants to review its capital program; it currently isn't in alignment with the goals of the Governor.

Education

Education is a priority at MDOD and it would like to form a work group. The Department is looking at some people on the Commission and people in the community to help with the effort. This group would aid Nancy Grasmick and relieve some of the duties of her staff.

IX General Discussion

Access Grant

Special thanks to those reviewing Maryland Access Grant applications. If you still want to participate contact Cari Watrous.

Outstanding Youth with a Disability Award

Commissioners can volunteer to review candidates for The Outstanding Youth with a Disability Award. Candidates are nominated by their Legislators and there is a monetary award. Contact Stephanie Murdock if you would like to participate.

Employment Task Force

Susan Holland is a member of the Employment Taskforce. The Taskforce has ideas on how to change the system, primarily, accountability of agencies and employment services should be directed by the individual.

The State Highway Administration

Commissioner raises the question why the State Highway Administration does not have any input on the disabilities commission about making things accessible. Tom Curtis is the director of Transportation Policy at MDOD; he can coordinate any efforts to contact the State Highway Administration regarding accessibility.

Extreme Disabilities Expo

MDOD staff Stephanie Murdock is working on an outreach for this summer, an extreme sports disability outreach program with a group called amp-rider. These are amputated extreme athletes and we are trying to reach out not just to people with disabilities but to everyone. She is looking for help from the commission to make this event successful.

Guest Columnist for Monthly Updates

The MDOD is looking for guests columnists for the MDOD monthly update. It was suggested that all commissioners take a turn writing an article of 250 words or less.

MCOD Newsletter

It was suggested that the Commission should have their own newsletter.

X Future Meeting Schedule and Public Comment

- MDOD staff Stephanie Murdoch has been working the schedule for MCOB meetings; they will continue to be on Thursday, same time slot, and different locations. The schedule of meetings will be included in the next monthly update. Commissioner Dave Ward comments that the Commission can meet more often if needed, especially in regards to getting input on the workgroups.
- Playground construction project: the last weekend of construction is this weekend the site is located behind YMCA. It is 100% accessible, community stabilizing, a good project for that area and will be available for all children to use. The group that organized the volunteers has made it a priority that everyone who comes out will be given a job and would very much like everyone, especially people with disabilities, involved in the project.

XI Meeting Adjourned